

Nonmetallic Mineral Products Industry Indexes

March 2010

This report analyzes and explains the U. S. Geological Survey's (USGS) monthly leading and coincident indexes for the nonmetallic mineral products industry (NAICS 327). This industry was classified as the stone, clay, glass, and concrete products industry (SIC 32) under the Standard Industrial Classification system, which has been replaced by the North American Industry Classification System. Henceforth, the industry will be referred to as the nonmetallic mineral products industry. This industry processes certain industrial minerals, minerals that are neither metals nor fuels, into useful products. More than 50 percent of the total value of these products is shipped to the highly cyclical construction industry. The indexes have been computed for each month back to 1948 and are available on the World Wide Web at: <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/imii/scghist.txt>

Analysis

The nonmetallic mineral products leading index declined 3.2% in February to 189.9 from a revised 196.2 in January, and its 6-month smoothed growth fell to 3.9% from a revised 11.9% in January. The 6-month smoothed growth rate is a compound annual rate that measures the near-term trend. A growth rate above +1.0% is usually a signal of future growth in industry activity, while a growth rate below -1.0% points to a decrease in activity.¹ The sharp decline in the leading index in February is not necessarily a signal that the recovery in the nonmetallic mineral products industry will be ending. The growth rate is still suggesting that activity could grow modestly in the near term.

Three of the leading index's four indicators decreased in February, and one increased. A nearly 2-hour decline in the average workweek in nonmetallic mineral products establishments made the largest negative contribution, -3.2 percentage points, to the net decrease in the leading index. Abnormally harsh winter storms could account for at least a portion of that decline. The S&P stock price index for building products companies slipped in February and contributed -0.4 percentage

¹The 6-month smoothed growth rate is a compound annual rate based on the ratio of the current month's index to its average level during the preceding 12 months.

points. The yield spread between the U.S. 10-year Treasury Note and the Federal Reserve's federal funds rate tightened slightly, contributing -0.1 percentage point. Meanwhile, the index for new housing permits issued rose in February, offsetting declines in the other indicators by 0.2 percentage points (table 2).

The coincident index, which measures current industry activity, retreated in February, falling 3.6% to 116.2 from a revised 120.5 in January. Its 6-month smoothed growth rate sank further in negative territory to -8.8% from a revised -3.3% in January.

Explanation

The USGS uses the same methodology for the nonmetallic mineral products indexes that it uses for the metal manufacturing indexes in the *Metal Industry Indicators*. This methodology consists of constructing and tracking, each month, two composite indexes of diverse economic indicators. The composite leading index for nonmetallic mineral products signals, several months in advance, major changes in current economic activity as measured by a composite coincident index. The construction of the leading and coincident indexes follows well-established procedures for the analysis of cyclical indicators that were developed at the National Bureau of Economic Research, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the Center for International Business Cycle Research.

Coincident indicators

The indicators selected to represent current activity in the coincident index for the nonmetallic mineral products industry are industrial production, the value of shipments in 1982 dollars, and total employee hours worked. Previously, these indicators reflected activity in the stone, clay, glass, and concrete products industry (SIC 32). The source agencies for these data, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), U.S. Census Bureau, and the Federal Reserve Board have completed their conversions to the NAICS. These indicators now reflect activity in the nonmetallic mineral products industry (NAICS 327). According to BLS, approximately 99% of the employment in NAICS 327 was classified in SIC 32.

Leading indicators

Leading indicators represent various economic activities that can point to near-term changes in industry activity. The following four indicators proved to be reliable at signaling major changes in economic activity in the nonmetallic mineral products industry: 1) average weekly hours worked in the nonmetallic mineral products industry; 2) an index of new private housing units authorized by building permits in the United States; 3) the Standard & Poor's stock price index for building products companies; and 4) the yield spread between the 10-year Treasury Note interest rate and the federal funds interest rate. The composite leading index constructed from these indicators turned before the coincident index at every trough and at 89% of the peaks. Although the leading

index did not lead the coincident index at every peak, the average leads at troughs and peaks were 8.1 and 9.4 months, respectively, for an overall lead of 8.8 months.

This report was produced at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) by the Minerals Information Team. For more information about these indexes, contact Gail James (703-648-4915), e-mail (gjames@usgs.gov).

The USGS also produces *Mineral Industry Surveys* (MIS) or *Minerals Yearbook* chapters for most industrial minerals important to the U.S. economy. These include MIS for Cement, Clays, Crushed Stone, Dimension Stone, and Construction Sand and Gravel. Information on how to access these reports is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs>

Tables and charts follow.

Table 1.
The Nonmetallic Mineral Products Industry Indexes and Growth Rates

	Leading Index		Coincident Index	
	(1977 = 100)	Growth Rate	(1977 = 100)	Growth Rate
2009				
March	168.7	-22.5	121.9	-26.7
April	176.4	-13.5	122.6	-23.1
May	181.9	-6.4	121.6	-21.5
June	184.8	-1.9	121.3	-19.0
July	187.5	2.5	124.9	-11.6
August	193.9	10.1	124.1	-10.0
September	191.4	8.2	122.6r	-9.5r
October	189.8	7.2	118.8r	-12.1r
November	195.7	13.7r	122.5	-4.0r
December	192.6r	9.2r	118.3r	-8.4r
2010				
January	196.2r	11.9r	120.5r	-3.3r
February	189.9	3.9	116.2	-8.8

r: Revised

Note: Growth rates are expressed as compound annual rates based on the ratio of the current month's index to the average index during the preceding 12 months.

Table 2.
The Contribution of Nonmetallic Mineral Products Index Component to the Percent Change in the Index from the Previous Month

Leading Index	January	February
1. Average weekly hours, nonmetallic mineral products (NAICS 327)	1.5r	-3.2
2. Index of new private housing units authorized by permits	-0.4	0.2
3. S&P stock price index, building products companies	0.5	-0.4
4. Spread between the U.S. 10-year Treasury Note and the federal funds rate	0.2	-0.1
Trend adjustment	0.1	0.1
Percent change (except for rounding differences)	1.9r	-3.4
Coincident Index		
1. Industrial production index, nonmetallic mineral products (NAICS 327)	0.9r	-0.9
2. Total employee hours, nonmetallic mineral products (NAICS 327)	0.8r	-2.9
3. Shipments of nonmetallic mineral products (NAICS 327)	0.0	NA
Trend adjustment	0.1	0.1
Percent change (except for rounding differences)	1.8r	-3.7

Sources: Leading: 1, Bureau of Labor Statistics; 2, U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Geological Survey; 3, Standard & Poor's; 4, Federal Reserve Board, Conference Board, and U.S. Geological Survey. Coincident: 1, Federal Reserve Board; 2, Bureau of Labor Statistics and U.S. Geological Survey; 3, U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Geological Survey. All series are seasonally adjusted, except 3 of the leading index.

r: Revised NA: Not available

Chart 1.

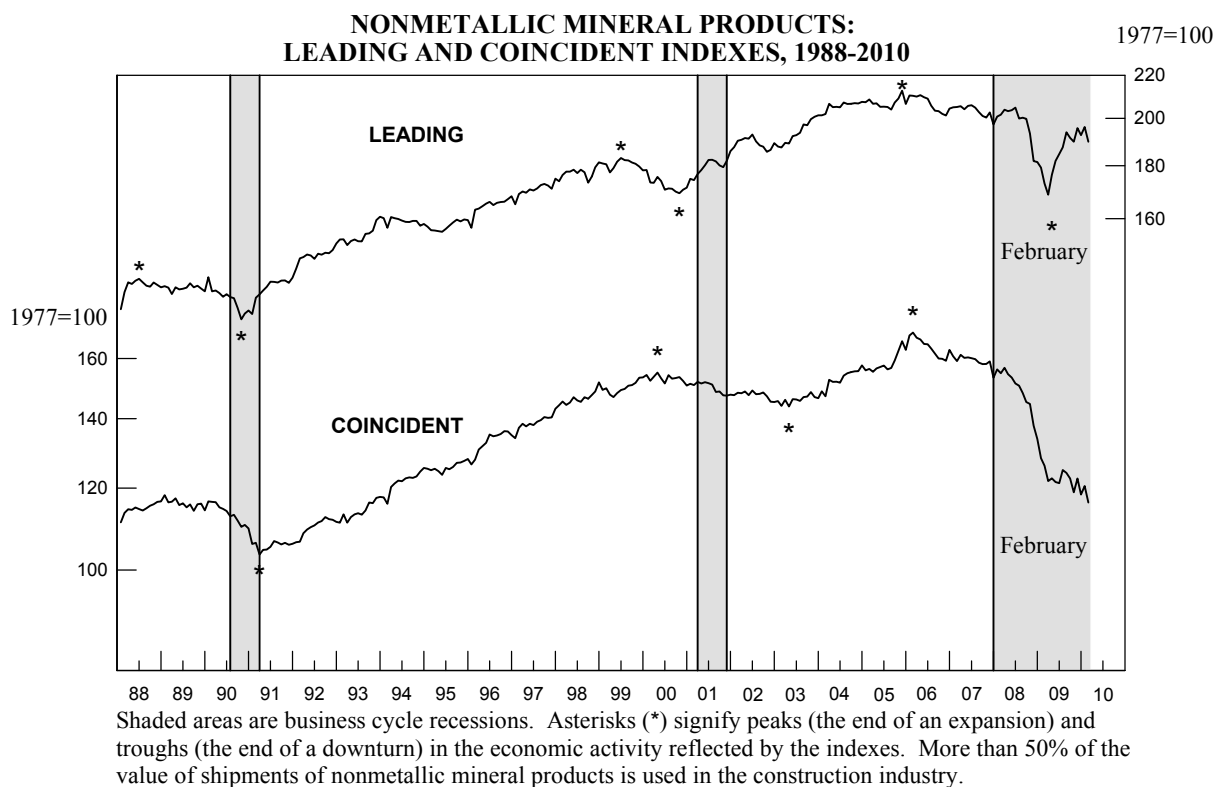


Chart 2.

